

THOSE OTHER FALL COLORS

Fall in Montana is not fall in, say, Wisconsin or New England, where gaudy sugar maples and ancient oaks light up entire counties in brilliant reds, oranges, and yellows. Yet this is without question the Treasure State's prettiest season. And not just from quaking aspen stands shouting yellow from forest ravines, golden tamaracks transforming mountainsides, or cottonwoods glowing along the upper Yellowstone River. Those gift shop calendar images are certainly lovely, but Montana's autumn is also awash in quieter, subtle colors.

Lichens, for instance. These mysterious fungus-algae combos come in pigmentations—grays, yellows, oranges,

and even fluorescent greens—that become more intense in the wet, cool conditions of fall. Lichen pigmentation is a by-product of complex tissue chemistry that blocks harmful ultraviolet rays, allows the organisms to absorb light and heat, and protects them from being eaten.

But enough of the science. Across Montana, lichens are painting prairies and forests with their quiet hues, as are shrubs, grasses, forbs, algae, mosses, and ferns. Next time you're outdoors, try to look past the gaudy aspens and larches to find these other fall colors. They may not grace a calendar cover, but they still add vivid accents that illuminate this wonderful time of year. —*Editor*

Above: Fireweed in late fall
RICK CLARK

Opposite page: Red osier dogwood against Cataract Falls near Augusta
KEVIN LEAGUE





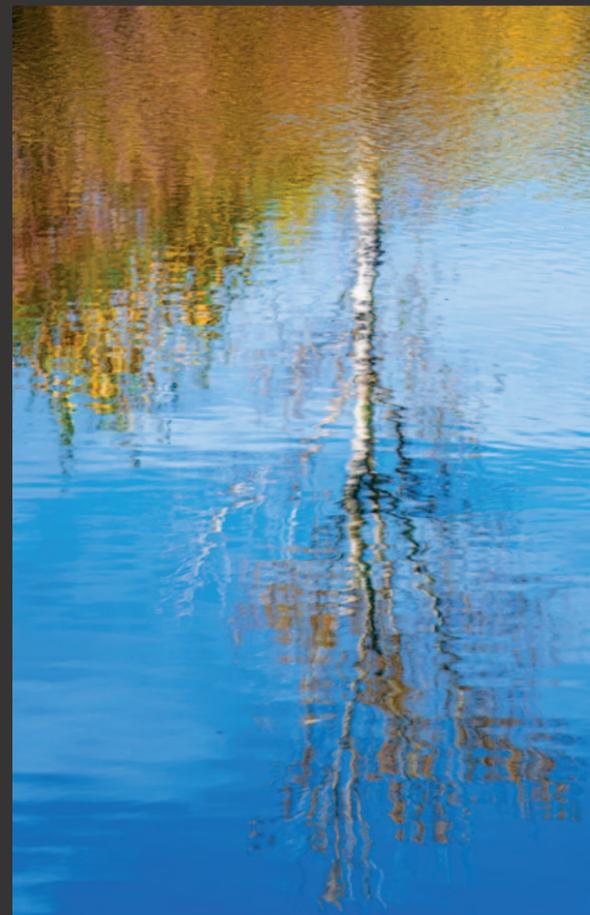
Above: Illuminated slopes below the snowcapped Garden Wall, Glacier National Park
JOHN LAMBING

Right: Decaying leaves near Missoula
PAUL QUENEAU



Above: Autumn willows along Prickly Pear Creek near Helena
STEVE McMORRAN

Left: Black-capped chickadee on fallen maple leaves and moss
DONALD M. JONES



Opposite page: A dog runs along the banks of Fleshman Creek near Livingston
ALLEN RUSSELL

Left: Fall foliage reflection
ROSS PETER NELSON

Top: A mallard drake takes flight at Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge
KEN ARCHER

Above: Bull elk in shadow behind illuminated grasses
JOEL MAES



Top left: Seedling emerging from a crack in a fallen tree along the Clark Fork River
TOM PATRICK

Top right: Jelly fungus on a spruce log, Flathead Valley
DEE LINNELL BLANK

Middle left: Lichen layers on a boulder
STEVE LUFT

Middle right: Dried coneflower heads
JULIE BETTS

Bottom left: Frosty leaves in the Flathead National Forest
LAURA VERHAEGHE

Bottom right: Underside of a rosy larch bolete mushroom, near Victor
STEVEN AKRE

Opposite page: Old-growth forest floor along Pete Creek in the Purcell Mountains
RANDY BEACHAM



Above: Autumn light
over Skalkaho Creek,
Bitterroot Valley

**ESTELLE
SHUTTLEWORTH**

Right: Pronghorn
buck in prairie foliage
during the rut

LON LAUBER

